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California Legislature

Senate Fact Finding Committee  
on  
Public Health and Safety

October 17, 1966

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Dr. Johsua Lederberg  
Stanford School of Medicine  
Stanford, California

Dear Dr. Lederberg:

At the request of the institutions of medical research and teaching in California, the California Senate is considering the value of enacting a statewide pound release law such as exists in Los Angeles County, the City of Los Angeles, in several other jurisdictions in California, and in twelve other states.

This committee has been assigned the task of reporting to the Legislature on this subject at the beginning of the 1967 Legislative Session.

There has come to the attention of the committee an article written by you and published in The Washington Post, Sunday, August 21, 1966. (I am enclosing a copy of the article.)

The article contains a number of interesting ideas and the committee wishes to pursue them fully. We would very much appreciate your answering the following questions based on your article.

1. In the article you propose that studies be made of the need for laboratory animals and of the possibility of creating a farming system to fulfill the needs. Has anything come of your proposal?

2. In the article you say that there have been no systematic studies of the need for purebred research animals, but that "some are in the process." Can you give me references to these studies? Are there any published results as yet?

3. Another recommendation in your article is that legislation be passed to prohibit "the routine use in drug testing or other research of

"any domestic cats and dogs other than those bred for the purpose," except for special animals "that might carry unique hereditary characteristics or diseases." This recommendation, according to your article, coupled with the recommendation to establish farms for laboratory animals, would bring about a number of gains to both society and science. The following is a list of those gains, mentioned in the article, divided into two categories -- (1) social, economic and political gains, and (2) scientific gains.

I. Social, economic, and political gains:

A. Stopping the waste of energy used in the battle between the medical researchers and the antivivisectionists.

B. Saving the cost of the battle over principle by implementing a practical solution to the problem: breeding animals for laboratory use.

C. Eliminating a major market for stolen pets.

D. Eliminating the possibility that a pet, purchased from a pound, will be used in an experiment.

E. Uncoupling research from anxieties about pets.

II. Scientific gains:

A. Increasing the precision and reproducibility of experiments by using only selected types of felines and canines.

B. Increasing the reliability of the results of work on drug safety, developmental anomalies, behavior, and surgical transplantation.

C. Eliminating the following factors which arise in scientific experiments on stray animals:

1. Dubious heredity.

2. Cruel handling, which might influence the animal's behavior in psychological tests.

3. Infectious disease, which might confound the animal's response to drugs and vaccinations.

D. Obtaining for medical research animals of well-defined strains, bred under controlled conditions of nutrition and custody.

E. Obtaining more kinds of animals to meet specialized needs.

One point I wish to clarify is whether you had acute experiments as well as chronic experiments in mind when you listed the scientific gains to be made from using animals bred for laboratory use.

According to the information available to the committee, all animal experiments used in teaching and research can be divided into two classes: acute and chronic. An acute experiment is defined as one in which the animal is given a general anesthetic before the experiment and is destroyed before regaining consciousness. A chronic experiment lasts longer and the experimental animal may be subjected to pain.

When you proposed that there be a prohibition on the use of anything but animals bred for the purpose in "the routine use in drug testing or other research", did you mean to recommend that only animals bred for the purpose should be used in acute experiments as well as chronic experiments? Certainly a good case for doing so can be made, based on the social, economic, and political arguments contained in your article.

I need to know whether the scientific gains, listed in your article, from using purebred animals, apply in whole or in part to acute experiments. If they do, an even stronger case is made for developing a breeding program for animals used in medical research and teaching. I would very much appreciate your elaboration of this point.

On behalf of the committee and the Legislature, I wish to thank you for your kind help.

Yours very truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Walter W. Stiern, D.V.M." The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

WALTER W. STIERN, D.V.M.  
Chairman

WWS:gml

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